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**CHURCH NEWS**  
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## THE BRUTAL MURDER OF A PRIEST OF THE ROCA IN GATCHINA, RUSSIA

The bulletin "Vertograd Inform" in a special issue of Sept. 17, 1997, contained the following information:

"On Sunday, Sept. 1/14 in the city of Gatchina a suburb of St. Petersburg Protopresbyter Alexander Zharkov was brutally beaten up and killed by being shot by a revolver. He was the rector of the Church of the New-Venerable-Martyr Grand Duchess St. Elisabeth Feodorovna and died in the hospital of the same name. On July 24 of the present year the parish headed by Fr. Alexander left the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church and transferred to canonical subordination of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. The warden of the parish is the noted historian and theologian Dr. Basil Lurye.

"After leaving his home on Sunday around six A.M. and proceeding to the train station, Fr. Alexander was seized by unknown persons who forcibly shoved him into a car. In the car the Protopresbyter was beaten around the head and chest after which the criminals shot him in the side and threw the corpse onto the highway where he was found at 10:30 by passersby. The family of Fr. Alexander learned of what happened only that evening, and in addition, at the morgue the Matushka of the murdered priest was assured that her husband died as a result of a traffic accident. It was only after the pathologist revealed that there were bullet wounds on the body of Fr. Alexander that the prosecutor of the Pushkin district of Leningrad Province initiated a criminal investigation of the facts of the murder."

"According to the testimony of a clergyman of the Church the New-Venerable-Martyr Grand Duchess St. Elisabeth Feodorovna, Subdeacon Nicholas Savchenko, threats of physical punishments began to rain down on Fr. Alexander immediately following his departure from the Moscow Patriarchate. Some of these threats which came over the phone were recorded. They originated from the members of the administration of the St. Petersburg Diocese of the Moscow Patriarchate who were displeased by the fact that the proceeds -- of which they had an exaggerated conception -- from the hospital church would be out of their hands

"The conditions at the church became extremely tense after Sept. 6, when the premises of the church were sealed shut by members of the Department Fighting Economic Crimes of the GUVd of St. Petersburg. Entering the church during the divine services representatives of the instruments of legal enforcement unceremoniously searched out the priests and some parishioners who were made to face the wall and then required to 'vacate the premises.' During this 'raid' the members of the Department did not conceal the fact that *their actions were stipulated by a request of the St. Petersburg Diocesan Government of the Moscow Patriarchate and personally by Metr. Vladimir (Kotlarov)* [Italics by "Ch. N."] After a long interrogation held in the church itself, Fr. Alexander and two parishioners were taken to the police headquarters. There the investigator began to threaten them with prison. "*Very well, then," the Pastor-Confessor replied to the investigator, "we shall serve there!"*" "Whom will you serve?" the astounded investigator asked. "The Lord God," was the reply of the persecuted. After some time Fr. Alexander and his companions were released and told in parting: "You do not matter to us, you simply bother somebody upstairs."

"Due to measures necessary as a result, the burial of the body of the murdered Protopresbyter Alexander Zharkov will be held no sooner than Sept. 20. The temporary supervisor of the St. Petersburg Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, Bishop Evtikhyy intends to be present at the funeral.

"The murder of Fr. Alexander is not the first case in recent years in St. Petersburg of the punishment of a priest for his faith. In 1995, Priest Andrew Savitsky was murdered. This was also not long after he left the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Church. He was the son of a present priest of our Church, Fr. Vladimir Savitsky.

"The clergy and parishioners of the New Venerable-Martyr Grand Duchess St. Elisabeth Feodorovna are completely convinced that Protopresbyter Alexander Zharkov was killed for his faith and his end must remind us of a martyr's struggle. The parishioners hope that thanks to the prayers of the faithful children of the True Church, as well as to the efforts of churchly elements and the amount of information, they will successfully endure the threatened punishments against the remaining clergy: Priest Alexis Tarkhov and Hieromonk Arseny Zubakov."

To round out this information, the same bulletin gives a more detailed account of the personality of the New Martyr Fr. Alexander Zharkov which we will impart, but with some abbreviations.

"The murdered Protopresbyter Alexander Zharkov was born on Feb. 12, 1946. He graduated from the Leningrad Ecclesiastical Academy at the end of the 70's and was ordained to the priesthood and served in the parishes of the Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) Diocese of the Moscow Patriarchate in Luge and Siversk. In 1981 he was appointed to the clergy of the Shuvalov Church of St. Alexander Nevsky in St. Petersburg, but in 1990 he became the rector of this church with the rank of protopresbyter.

"On Feb. 6, 1993, Fr. Alexander dedicated City Hospital No. 3 to the New-Venerable-Martyr Grand Duchess St. Elisabeth Feodorovna in St. Petersburg and set up a chapel in it where services soon began. Fr. Alexander also served funerals for the deceased in the hospital morgue. The principle reason for the persecution of Batushka during the use of the chapel was for enlightening patients of the hospital with the light of the Christian Faith; the chapel produced no income and the cost of its construction was met by the families of the deceased.

"In 1994 Fr. Alexander laid the foundations for a church next to the hospital. In this new section of the city there was not a single church. The financial support for this came from the parishioners and to this day Fr. Alexander never received any help in liquidating the debt from either the diocesan or the sponsors. Fr. Alexander took an active part in the work of construction; carrying bricks, mixing mortar.

Approximately in 1993 Fr. Alexander in his talks with his spiritual children began to express a desire to leave the M. P. His pastoral conscience could not be reconciled to the apostasies of the Patriarchate the most important of which he considered to be ecumenism. *The Fr. Alexander rejected the heresy of ecumenism not only in word, but in deed refusing to accept the humanitarian aid of the Baptists.* [Italics by "CH. N."]

"On May 31, 1996, the church of St. Alexander Nevsky in Shuvalovsk burned down by arson and the rector was Fr. Alexander. The difficult project of its restoration fell on the shoulders of its pastor. During the rebuilding a new rector was designated at the request of Fr. Alexander. After this a flood of nasty slanders poured into the address of Fr. Alexander: he was accused of arson. Learning of this, Batushka fell ill from worry. Ever since, lies, slanders, and the most senseless accusations began to constantly pursue the good shepherd.

"With Nativity of 1997 regular services began in the newly constructed church next to the hospital. Soon the diocese denounced Fr. Alexander that he supposedly received fantastic proceeds which he would not share with the metropolitan. The sources of these proceeds they could only point to the funerals of deceased patients of the hospital. Enemies in the M.P. accused Fr. Alexander the completely absurd charge of trading in human organs from the morgue. During meetings with Fr. Alexander, Metr. Vladimir (Kotlarov) repeatedly threatened him saying that "even a Metropolitan has his own mafia," deliberately using in his conversation the jargon of thieves and extortionists.

"The atmosphere of lies and envy around the good shepherd of Christ in the St. Petersburg Diocese of the M. P. became simply unbearable. Fr. Alexander retired, and then on June 24, 1997 together with his parish was united to the ROCA. Following this confessional step a flood of smears and gossip around the honorable name of Fr. Alexander greatly increased. Those in the Diocese said that Batushka intended in the Church Abroad "to serve funerals for foreigners for dollars." In the end the completely absurd rumor spread through the city that Fr. Alexander controlled the city's commerce in honey.[!] In the most recent period Fr. Alexander served in the hospital church while the newly constructed church next to the hospital was sealed off on Aug. 15 by the builders who were its legal owners. The latter situation particularly angered the leadership of the St. Petersburg Diocese of the M.P.

"It must be said that the future Hieromartyr in his daily life was a paragon of humility, non-possessiveness and a self-sacrificial service of his people. He lived in complete poverty: his family of four lived in tiny two room apartment in the old "Khrushchov" \* in the town of Gatchina from which for many years Fr. Alexander traveled by trolley to his church. The trip from home to church took him two hours one way. The exceptional humility of the life of the shepherd is testified by the following episode. Once a fire happened to Fr. Alexander. The hall and outer door burned. It took an entire month for him to collect the means to buy a new door.

Simplicity and modesty were characteristic of Fr. Alexander in all things. He was always accessible and in preaching he never liked to go on at length and verbosely, but spoke briefly and ever to the point and aptly. Likewise his serving was simplicity itself; he did not like the pomposity and excessive theatricality which is so typical in many of the churches of the Moscow Patriarchate. Evidently, due to this simplicity and modesty, so rarely encountered in the M. P., Fr. Alexander was not loved by the Patriarchal establishment. The Sergianist clergy considered him strange and an "odd" personality. One Sergianist priest well disposed to Batushka even advised him: "You should buy a car, or an apartment. Why waste money on a new church?..."

The transgressing hand of the hireling murderers cut short the life of the good shepherd of the flock of Christ when he reached the fifty-second year of his earthly pilgrimage. But at the same time, the right hand of the Lord, which not long before this led Fr. Alexander into the enclosure of the True and Sole Saving Church, received his sacred martyric soul into the dwellings of celestial blessedness. The St. Petersburg flock, and with it our entire persecuted Church, has found a new intercessor in the Heavens. A triumphant martyric crown shines anew for her, the true glory of Christ's Church is manifest anew: the glory of martyrs. Fr. Alexander walked the path of Christ, offering himself as a spotless sacrifice and sanctifying our land with his holy blood. Now the Faith of Fr. Alexander, the hope of Fr. Alexander, the Church of Fr. Alexander, has been crowned by a victorious crown by the Lord Himself. Who could protest against them; who could say that they are in error? No, the life and death of Fr. Alexander is a solemn triumph of our Faith and Church; this is the victory that overcomes the world! And this is a great comfort for us and an urgent summons to follow the path of Fr. Alexander because our Church is the Church of the Martyrs because none in Paradise are not crucified ...?"

Naturally, the prayers of the community prompts hopes that public opinion will defend the two remaining clergy which is undoubtedly necessary, but will not the parish need to think also about how to organize for the continual preservation of their pastors?

The family of Fr. Alexander was poverty stricken in his lifetime and now after his martyric end will be in an even more desperate situation. Those interested in providing financial help to Matushka and her children can send their contributions to the address of "Church News" and we will make sure that they will be personally given to her by reliable parties. Please be sure to indicate that this is for the family of Fr. Alexander.

\* This is a slang pun on the name of Khrushchov (who built cheap apartment buildings during his regime) referring to a word for a slum: "trushchob"!

## TWO FORMER REGULATIONS OF METROPOLITAN VITALY CONCERNING JERUSALEM

Below we print the text of two regulations of Metropolitan Vitaly (Ustinov) from 1994 which represent a novelty in regard to relations of ROCA with the Moscow Patriarchate in comparison with the entire previous history of the Church Abroad. Starting in 1947, the clergy of Moscow Patriarchate, as a rule, were not permitted on the territory of monasteries of the ROCA in the Holy Land. From 1947 to 1985 on the occasion of visits to Jerusalem by hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate, following the **standing** orders of the Chief of Mission, on the gates of our convents and monasteries a placard would be displayed, indicating that the duration of the visit were considered to be days of mourning for the Mission and the gates of the monasteries are closed to pilgrims or visitors. In spite of fact that in those years too the Moscow hierarch were guests of the Jerusalem Patriarch, non-admittance of them to the premises of ROCA convents and monasteries in no way affected the very cordial relationship between the Mission's administration and the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Indeed, during these years the Chief of the Mission was never held in higher regard: the Patriarch not only informally invited him for an cup of coffee, but (which was absolutely unprecedented in the history of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem) -- its Chief was twice invited to attend the Jerusalem Synod's meetings and Patriarch personally handed him the antimension for his use.

The first document is written on a Russian letterhead:

Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad

March 26/April 8, 1994 #1/20/72

Rev. Mother Juliana

Abbess of the Ascension Convent on the Mt. of Olives

## UKAZ

on March 23/April 5, 1994 the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad deliberated on the possibility of acceptance to the monasteries of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem of clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate and other jurisdictions, who have as an object the veneration of holy places.

*R e s o l v e d: not to forbid the clergy of Moscow Patriarchate and other jurisdictions to enter our monasteries as pilgrims for worshipping in holy places. but not to permit them to conduct any services on the territory of monasteries. [italics by "Ch. N."].*

Signed (with affixed seal) by the Presiding Bishop of the ROCA Metropolitan Vitaly and Deputy Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, Bishop Hilarion.

The second document is written on an English letterhead of the President of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCA and bears the amazing date of 1/19 of April, 1994!

Very Reverend Father Abbot Theodosy.

With this letter I authorize you to place in appropriate locations in our monasteries an announcement that *the clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate and other Communist countries may not be admitted onto territory of our monasteries*. It should be also quite clear that under no conditions can they be offered the possibility of serving any services or occasional services, even at the graves of those who are buried there. [italics by "Ch. N."].

As far as Russian lay-pilgrims are concerned, they certainly may visit our monasteries. An ukaz about this was sent to you by the Synod Office. I ask you to keep in mind that all ukazes from the Synod's Office, which concern our monasteries, are a verification of my orders, because I am the immediate spiritual Chief of all the monasteries in Holy Land.

I ask you to immediately follow this ukaz, because the centennial date of the repose of Fr. Archimandrite Antonin Kapoustin is nearing with all its possible and undesirable consequences.

Your Reverend's sincere well-wisher, signed Metropolitan Vitaly.

Both of these documents were signed by Metropolitan Vitaly within only 11 days of each other and yet clearly contradict one another: One ukaz to Abbess Juliana orders her "*not to forbid the clergy of Moscow Patriarchate*" to enter our monasteries, while, in the other, Abbot Theodosy is instructed to post an announcement declaring that "*clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate... may not be permitted onto the territory of our monasteries*"!

In connection with these two contradicting documents regarding matters in Holy Land, we also would like to inform our readers of the address of the brave Abbess Juliana: Muy Rev. Abades Juliana; Casilla 14493, Correo 21; Santiago, Chile.

From a letter of Abbess Juliana to "Church News" it is clear that the member of the infamous commission of Archbishop X, who demanded that she leave the Convent within 24 hours was Archpriest George Larin!

Rather than being disheartened in any way, Mother Juliana intends to work on the restoration of her convent and orphanage, which suffered much from her absence while she was head of the Mt. of Olives Convent in Jerusalem. Intending to infuse new life in the establishments she founded 30 years ago, just a short while before her appointment to Jerusalem she arranged in 1991 for the arrival of 9 girls from Russia, who were to be accompanied by mother or a close woman relative in order

to teach them prayers, and order of church services in hope that some of them will become a nun. This process was stalled due to her appointment to Jerusalem. Yet, Mother Juliana is full of energy and hope for God's help and with friends' assistance intends to restore her work in Chile.

According to the latest news from Jerusalem, as was expected, a new abbess to replace Mother Juliana was appointed by Metropolitan Vitaly (doubtless on the recommendation of Archbishop Mark) Nun Moisea (formerly Sr. Nonna) from Gethsemane Convent. In our June issue of "Ch. N." # 6 (62) we stated previously that she had belonged to the Paris (Eulogy) schism, lived for a long time in France and because of her job was a frequent visitor to USSR. Shortly after her permanent arrival to the Holy Land, the Israeli police warned Chief of the Mission that she is considered by them to be an Soviet agent. Because of that he restricted her advancement in the convent's administration.

In her person the Moscow Patriarchate has now and very valuable ally on the Mt. of Olives.

#### A NOTE ABOUT A "SUPERVISOR"

One of our readers in Russian has sent us his composition, signed with the initials "K.S.":

"Only a short while ago His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly wrote in a letter to Archbishop Mark: 'In my opinion you were spiritually deceived, entranced and to a significant degree taken captive. In such a spiritually unsober state you lost the gift of the Holy Spirit to discern spirits, and began to misinterpret everything...'

Now, this person who cannot 'discern spirits' has received from an unknown power the title of 'supervisor' over all matters connected with the Jerusalem Mission, and naturally, 'misrepresenting everything' made everything wrong, declaring white to be black and black, white.

And under these wrongly composed ukazes we see the signature of the Vladyka Metropolitan.

Come now! Does the Vladyka Metropolitan himself know what was signed by supposedly his own hand?! Is not there some sort of witchcraft here? Doesn't this remind us of an scary and mysterious fairy tale by Hoffmann, or perhaps Pogorelsky's 'Lafertovskaya Makovnitza', where a black cat (in our case, the one who has "lost the gifts of the Holy Spirit") is transformed by an unknown power into a 'titulary sovietnik' ['titular counselor' -- a rank of pre-revolutionary clerk] (in that case, "Supervisor" Aristarkh Falalei Murlykin (in our case, Archbishop Mark) in order to deceive and get a girl in trouble (in our case, the Church).

'O my!' she said, being out of her mind, 'If you please! This is grandma's black cat! Order him to take off his gloves: you see he has claws.' With these words she walked out of the room and ran to her front parlor. She ran, so we will too."

#### TWO REPORTS OF BISHOP GREGORY REGARDING RAPPROCHEMENT OF THE ROCA WITH THE MP

On April 15/28th. 1993 Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) presented to the Synod of Bishops a report in connection with a troubling question regarding negotiations of the German diocese of the ROCA with the Moscow Patriarchate. This report received absolutely no response. On 17/30 of July of the same year, Bishop Gregory repeated his original April report, making some additions to it. Since the question of the relationship of the ROCA with the MP gets now a very contemporary character, we publish below the report of Bishop Gregory, who for nearly 55 years was the immediate assistant to the three former First Hierarchs of the ROCA.

To the President of the Synod of Bishops  
of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia,  
His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly

#### REPORT

concerning the question of rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate  
by Bishop Gregory

In "The Herald of the German Diocese" (#1, 1993) an epistle by Archbishop Mark was published in which the following was stated:

"Our diocese has not missed an opportunity to have a serious dialogue. The representatives of our Church on numerous occasions participated in conversations with representatives of Moscow Patriarchate. Expressing our readiness to develop the dialogue in the future, we went to the extreme limit permitted by our Council of Bishops".

Was there the decision of our Synod or the Council about permission given to Archbishop Mark or any one of our Bishops which would authorize Archbishop Mark or any of our bishops to meet with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate in name of the Church Abroad or even anyone from her dioceses?

Personally, I have no knowledge of it.

I believe, that in case there was no such decision, then a dialogue held individually by any one of our hierarchs might bring confusion into our flock abroad and also mislead the representatives of Moscow Patriarchate, who easily might assume that our Church indeed is in the process of reaching an agreement with them.

Such a dialogue might bring a radical change in all our former policies toward the Moscow Patriarchate and it should not take place without a special resolution from the Council of Bishops.

I have presented this report for deliberation by the Council of Bishops in the month of April, but all the meetings were so much overwhelmed with the church affairs in Russia, that this question was not examined.

I am returning to it again because from the minutes of a diocesan meeting in Suzdal it is obvious that, unfortunately, the aspirations of Vladyka Mark for union with the Moscow Patriarchate have not ceased.

So, the representative of an parish in Viatka, V. A. Polnoch, informed us about "the intentions of Vladyka Mark to come to Moscow in order to approach the Moscow Patriarchate."

Deacon Michael Makeev (Moscow) "said that one of his acquaintances, who was a member of the ROCA, with blessing of Vladyka Mark traveled to the Moscow Patriarchate to the parish of Priest Asmus".

Unfortunately, I have heard on several occasions about Vladyka Mark's sympathies for the Moscow Patriarchate.

I must ask again for an answer to a previous question: who has and when was Archbishop Mark authorized, or in general any of our hierarchs, to enter into dialogue with the Moscow Patriarchate?

The Synod of Bishops' obedient servant, signed Bishop Gregory."

To this report, also, Bishop Gregory never received an answer. The Church Abroad never informed anyone about the obvious change of its basic position regarding its relationship with the Moscow Patriarchate, although the "Press Release" of the Synod's Chancellery insists that "while not changing the principle of its relations with the Moscow Patriarchate (the ROCA is not in the Eucharistic Communion with the MP), the Synod of Bishops at its May session resolved to be necessary to send an ukaz to the Chief of the Ecclesiastical Mission and abbesses of the monasteries in Gethsemane and Mt. of Olives, in which they are directed to receive Patriarch Alexis with his entourage and meet him politely and offer a cup of tea, as is customary in the Near East."

The agreements and dialogues of the Church Abroad with the Moscow Patriarchate, besides manifesting a lack of principle and conviction, or simply spinelessness in a number of her Hierarchs, is also a blatant betrayal of the parishes in Russia who trusted the ROCA and now stand on the threshold of their probable return into the embrace of the very same Moscow Patriarchate they left a few years ago.

#### A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE NEW LAW "OF FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS"

The draft of the Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations" for several months has aroused world wide approval both within and without Russia. After a few casuistic "reworkings" in the final analysis it remains almost unaltered from its original draft. After a few days it was approved by Pres. Yeltsin and was submitted to the State Duma for confirmation, comprised to a significant degree of Communists. The one least disturbed by the new law was the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate which is firmly in league with the leadership of "democratic" Russia.

In a supplement to the newspaper "The Church-Social Messenger", "Russkaya Mysl" ("Russian Thought"), of Sept. 18 a very significant article by Natalya Babasyan appeared which gives numerous very valuable facts about the process of "reworking" this law and the accompanying behind the scenes efforts of the Moscow Patriarchate and of the government to bring it to life and eventually ensure its passage.

It turns out that on Sept. 1 various religious activists were shown on Moscow television being received by the President and the next day they released a special appeal in the name of the President of the Duma, G. Seleznev. As N. Babasyan notes, "the letter asserted 'that various parties had reached agreement on certain essential points of the law' and requested that 'in the immediate future he consider and pass the federal law' on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations in the form submitted by the President of the Russian Republic. This appeal was corroborated by the signatures of representatives of twelve of the largest religious associations in the country and was published by the mass media as confirming approval of the presidential law "by all confessions."

It is very interesting to note the actual procedure by which this appeal to the Duma was signed. As became clear during the debate on the law it was presented for signature to the representatives of various confessions during a session in the [Duma] Palace of the Social Advisory Political Council on Associations and Religious Organizations by President Yeltsin's administration. Babasyan directs our attention to the fact that in the phraseology of the text one sees the terminology of the Moscow Patriarchate and her Department of Foreign Ecclesiastical Relations.

Further she notes that the managing department head Andrew Protopopov who was entrusted with collecting the signatures entered the chamber during the debate having in hand only two pages: one, the text of the letter signed by Metr. Cyril, Archb. Sergius and Mufti [a Moslem religious law expert] T. Tadzhutddin, and the other, the almost blank for further signatures. As the article goes on to say in the words of an eye-witness "the very process of signing was of the simplest: Protopopov came up to the designated person, shoved the text into his hands and sullenly said: 'Sign!' With Rabbi Adolf Shaevich he simply passed the text across two rows of seats. All signed." By the evening of Sept. 2 enough signatures had been collected but the signatures of the Pentecostalists and the Old Believers were absent. The next day the Pentecostalists signed, but very unwillingly, while at the same time the Old Believers categorically refused. But a way out of this dilemma was found: instead of the Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church, the letter was signed by the more compliant Priestless Old Rite Church.

The 27th Article of the law, which was the only one, please note, which was rewritten, is especially dangerous for the dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Free Church and of the ROCA. It states that "Religious organizations which lack

documentation confirming their existence within the corresponding territory for a period of not less than 15 years may enjoy the rights of jurisdictional persons under the condition of their annual re-registration until the conclusion of the indicated 15 year period. During the given period the said organizations MAY NOT enjoy the rights mentioned in the previous articles..." Then follow endless points of limitation in various articles which can be summarized by saying that they cannot publish their literature, have religious schools, or benefit from property rights.

No less disturbing are the 5th and 6th Sections in Article 8 which state that "The centralized religious organizations whose structures are active within the territory of the Russian Federation which on a legal basis have been active within the Russian Federation for a period of no less than 15 years at the time of the application of the said religious organizations to the registering departments with a declaration of state registration have the right to use in their titles the words 'Russia', 'Russian' and those words derived from them."

The Catacomb Church has existed in Russia for more than 60 years, but understandably was outside the law of the atheistic state. In view of this, only the Moscow Patriarchate founded by Stalin in 1943 has had for the last 54 years of civil legality and will have the right to term itself the Russian Orthodox Church.

If one takes into consideration that Section 1 of Article 9 requires the organizers of religious associations "that on a permanent and legal basis have existed within the territory of the Russian Federation associated in a religious group and possess confirmation of their existence within the said territory for a period of not less than 15 years issued by the departments of the local government or possess confirmation of their inclusion in the structures of the central religious organizations issued by the said organizations," then beyond any doubt the Moscow Patriarchate will not permit the existence of a Russian Orthodox Church which refuses to recognize her jurisdiction.

Reporter Babasyan very reasonably says that "the presidential version of the law introduced a new category of religious organization into contemporary law which is a juridical person but disenfranchised. The degree of this disenfranchisement is such that in accordance with the above articles such an organization is forbidden not only to have its own means of mass media, but to import and distribute religious literature and to engage in educational activities."

Under these conditions the dioceses of the Free Russian Church (since it has existed within the territory of Russia since 1927 in the form of an underground organization) may prove to be in a more positive position than the parishes of the ROCA, which although they have existed as long, have a foreign administrative center. This may prove to be a kind of negative in the eyes of the Yeltsin administration only if Archb. Mark has not yet succeeded in reaching an understanding with the Moscow Patriarchate to the end that it manifest some tolerance in regard to the parishes of the Church Abroad as being possibly in the future united to it.

Taking into account that we have to deal with atheist-communists who have temporarily changed their spots into those of democrats, the 5th Section of the 3rd Article could not be more disturbing, for it says that "it is forbidden to attract minors into religious associations and in addition to instruct minors against their will or without the consent of their parents or guardians."

The Protestant leaders of various sects on Sept. 4 suddenly started to think about this dangerous law. Twenty of their representatives arranged a meeting in a hall of the Council of Christian Organizations and criticized President Yeltsin's law. They signed on to the appeal to the Duma of the Baptist Yuri Sipko who tried to vindicate himself in front of the other sects by saying that the law could be significantly improved and likewise by saying that the Patriarchate in the person of Metr. Cyril declared categorically that under no conditions would it repudiate the 15 Article long law. After a three hour session the Protestants wrote their own appeal to Yeltsin. It contains even a call to appeal to the American Congress with a request to increase the quota for those emigrating to the US on the basis of religious persecution.

On Sept. 8 a new session of the International Association for Religious Freedom was held. An interesting revelation was made: it seems that not one of the participants who signed the appeal of "support" for the new law had seen the text of the appeal that they had already signed. It was only to be found with the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate!

When they became aware of the situation, the Protestants declared to Yeltsin that "the proposed text cannot be considered satisfactory. And even more, for a whole series of reasons it is worse than the law adopted previously and returns us to the times when differences of opinion were persecuted in the name of defending arbitrarily interpreted state interests."

Then on Sept. 9 representatives of 30 Russian organizations which defend civil rights appeared at a press conference having also published a letter of protest to Yeltsin.

All these events did not take place without a few humorous incidents. At the press conference a letter of protest was distributed from the Apostolic Administrator in Russia, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrasiwicz, who was unaware that during his absence the letter supporting the law was signed by his own secretary Fr. V. Bartsevich.

After a few days Bartsevich himself and three others signed "an All-Confession Appeal" to Yeltsin notifying him that they retract their signatures. "We expressed our support," the Catholics and Protestants said, "being confident that our proposals would be considered in the final formulation of the proposed law. However, this did not occur." Thus, writes Babasyan, "the carefully constructed myth of the Presidential administration that the law had general support from other confessions began to unravel."

When this law actually comes into full effect, it is beyond doubt that it will precipitate a severe persecution of all Orthodox who do not recognize the Moscow Patriarchate. The annual registration stipulated will, in the final analysis, lead to a denial of registration on the basis of a whole host of opportunities for bureaucratic red tape already foreseen by the authorities (like the semi-annual term stipulated).

From the point of view of the legal consequences of this outrageous law, it is an infraction not only against the purely religious sphere of the citizens of Russia, but in many of its points directly contradicts the "democratic" constitution of the Russian Federation which has been in existence for several years.

After the official fall of Communism, the new "democratic" governments (while preserving in all the key positions quickly re-painted Communists) everywhere emphasized that with them the Church was separate from the state and therefore they would not interfere in ecclesiastical matters while at the same time simultaneously with this all continue to operate according to their former principle of "proletarians of all nations, unite!"

Thus we observe the remarkable solidarity throughout their politics in regard to the Church on the part of the Yeltsin government and the "sovereign" Republic of Latvia. The Law on Religion of the latter (adopted in 1995) in certain of its characteristics coincides exactly with the law of the Russian Federation "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations."

In order to found a religious organization in both Latvia and in Russia what is required is no less than ten persons. Both governments designate a period of years required for a religious organization to reach its full legal rights: in Moscow 15 and in Latvia 10. Both governments in almost the same language speak of the limitations and the annual re-registration and both similarly foresee cases in which they might obstruct the process of registration by means of bureaucratic red tape. Both likewise have in mind the "danger" to the integrity of the state posed by certain sects. This gives one reason to think that both Latvia and Russia, at the instigation of the Moscow Patriarchate, even in 1995 came to an agreement on these details.

The Free Latvian Orthodox Church over the course of already three years has not succeeded in attaining the registration of its parishes only due to their name. The religious law of Latvia stipulates the registration of the church of only one denomination. Orthodox are already registered under the Moscow Patriarchate and no attempts by the Free Latvian Church (which does not recognize the Moscow Patriarchate) are given any attention by the government. The Latvian Free Church cannot even sell candles and icons to their parishioners!

"The Baltic Times" of 11-17 September published a sympathetic article about the Free Latvian Church. This article was sent to the editors by Bishop Victor simultaneously with a postscript of a reporter which said, "...we sent this article to the Organization for Human Rights in Brussels. They were very interested in your case." One hopes that this is the same organization that, when it becomes necessary, will become interested in the case of the Free Russian Orthodox Church already persecuted by the Moscow Patriarchate.

At the same time Bishop Victor wrote a protest to the Representative of the Commission on European Rights about the 11th session of the Seim of the Latvian government, to the Prime Minister of the Latvian sovereign government and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It would be good if the "sovereign" state of Latvia could finally imagine that it is high time to stop being under the thumb of the former USSR and become a really independent state

## MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE'S "BATTLE" WITH THE HERESY OF RENOVATIONIST PRIEST KOCHETKOV IN MOSCOW

The rector of one of the largest and well known parishes in Moscow, the Dormition church in Pechatniki, George Kochetkov for a long period of time has caused many Orthodox concern over his openly renovationist activities. The main body of this parish consists of people who are proud of being intellectuals and having a higher education. There were many complaints about Kochetkov and other similar priests in Moscow which have been addressed to Patriarch Alexis Ridiger. At the diocesan convention in Moscow (1996) Priest Nicholas Krechetov made a report about a number of heretical priests in this diocese and asked that they should be defrocked. Ridiger's reaction was remarkable. He responded to Archpriest Krechetov that "in this particular case the canonical sanctions are out of place, but it is necessary to have a heart to heart talk with the respective clergy and only then to take the appropriate measures." It is unknown if Patriarch Alexis has had these conversations with those heretical priests, yet he did take some measures. Into this parish, in spite of strong opposition from Kochetkov a second priest was appointed, a young Michael Dubovitzky, of normal Orthodox views, but he stayed a very short time. The parishioners boycotted him, the rector mocked him, the choir quite often refused to respond to his exclamations and during his sermons a racket was deliberately created.

On June 29th, the feast day of All the Saints of Russia, during the church service he was brutally beaten up by the altar servers. According to one of the newspapers, Priest Kochetkov participated in it, according to another -- he was just a silent witness!

As the vestments of Fr. Michael were being ripped, his hands put behind his back and he was brutally beaten, he screamed: "Orthodox! Save me! They are killing me!" Not only were his vestments torn, but also his cassock. Somebody finally called the police. Priest Kochetkov told them that his co-priest had severe mental problems and he therefore was taken to a mental hospital. One must think that after being beaten up in the altar, Fr. Dubovitzky was not in a docile condition. He was given some sort of tranquilizing injection, proclaimed to be absolutely normal and released. On the next day he had convulsions and became short of breath. He was brought to hospital in an ambulance. While there he was given another injection and had to stay for a while.



The police gave him an official statement reporting that he had a number of injuries over his body and the mental hospital verified that he is normal. Nevertheless a number of parishioners questioned by reporters declared that no one put a finger on him and if he had some injuries, he had brought them upon himself by hitting his head against the wall in an insanity attack.

A detailed description of this horrible event was made by "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" (Independent Newspaper) on July, 1997, and the newspaper "Radonezh" # 12 (56).

Conflicts between the heretic Kochetkov and the newly appointed junior priest Fr. Michael Dubovitzky started rather soon after his appointment. Initially they came about because Kochetkov served the Liturgy in Russian not Slavonic and in his own translation. Fr. Dubovitzky told him that he had received his service book from the hands of the Patriarch who ordained him and he would serve according to it since he had given an oath to serve as directed.

Kochetkov simply omitted parts of the ectenias and his co-priest had to keep up with him during the services. On one occasion the aggravated Kochetkov demanded that Fr. Michael take off his vestments and leave. Upon his refusal, Kochetkov ordered his altar boys to "help him."

In an effort to get rid of this unwelcome priest, Kochetkov told the community that he was appointed to them without the approval of parishioners and, in addition, he had not attained the "canonical age." He is 28 years old.

Kochetkov serves with the royal doors open; he reads the secret prayers in full voice and sometimes even on the ambo.

After the outrageous beating up of Priest Dubovitzky in the altar during a church service, the Moscow Patriarchate finally decided to react. Ridiger issued two ukazes: one to Kochetkov (interestingly, it has no date and no record number) which states: "*Priest Kochetkov, a junior priest of the Dormition Church of the Theotokos in Pechatniki of the city of Moscow, because of his inability to stabilize the internal life of the parish* (although he promised the Chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archbishop of Solnechnogorsk Sergius, on June 27th to normalize it) and also because of insulting acts, which undermined the honor and dignity of a clergyman of the above mentioned church Priest Michael Dubovitzky and which resulted in a physical execution in the altar of the above mentioned church is dismissed by US from the position of junior priest of this church and is suspended from serving while the investigation is in process." (italics by "Ch. N.")

A second ukaz -- an order (this time having a July 1st, 1997, date and the record number 3075) was sent to a dean, Archpriest Oleg Klemyshev, to the Parish Council and to the Parish Community in Pechatniki. In it the Parish Council are asked, as the ones who "did not fulfill their statutory obligations and did not prevent an outrage against a clergyman of this church -- to resign."

The persons who participated in the outrage and the beating up of a cleric "until they sincerely repent of their deeds and are a spiritual father in Moscow -- are not to receive the Holy Mysteries, participate in the services (singing, reading, serving in the altar and so on)." By the same decree during the investigation period Archpriest O. Klemyshev is appointed deputy rector instead of the suspended Kochetkov. He is also ordered to re-consecrate the altar.

In neither the ukaz nor the order of Patriarch is a word said about the sectarian "agapes" which were served by Kochetkov right after the Liturgy at which blasphemously "bread is broken," his own unauthorized translations of services and similar novelties.

An interesting fact demonstrates that this whole terrible story was thought up in advance and staged by the Moscow Patriarchate: while a priest and servers were beating up another priest in the altar, some one had the steadiness of hand to make a video movie. Copies of it are already spreading around Moscow.

After beating up Priest Dubovitzky, according to "Russkii Vestnik" ("The Russian Herald") # 23-26 more than 250 priests, who were disturbed by sectarian Kochetkov and his "flock," sent a petition to Alexis Ridiger asking him to take canonical measures.

Some parishioners of the church of the Theotokos of Vladimir in their letter to editors of "Russkiy Vestnik" related that it seems the services in Kochetkov's parish are restored and now held in Church Slavonic and also believe that "definitely the process of this execution was thought through beforehand by an experienced producer" and feel that Kochetkov's followers should publicly apologize to Fr. Michael.

## THE HISTORY OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE GEORGIAN CHURCH FROM THE WCC IS NOT FINISHED

In April an "Open Letter from the Brotherhood of the Monastery of St. Shio of Mghvime" addressed to the Catholicos Patriarch Elias II with a demand for withdrawal from the World Council Churches or they would leave his jurisdiction, got a wide circulation.

As is known, Catholicos-Patriarch Elias II withdrew from the WCC and ECC, but at the same time he suspended all the clergy and confessors of the Orthodox doctrine of the Church "for creating a schism in the Georgian Church": he deposed the abbots from their positions and the monks and lay people were forbidden to receive Communion.

On June 16/July 9th, Archimandrite John Sheklashvili (one of the first who became troubled by participation of the Georgian Church in the WCC) published an open letter with 8 points to the Synod of Georgia. Point 4 states that "Verbal condemnation of Ecumenism and departure from this movement are good, but if words are not followed by deeds, then they are worthless. By its declaration the Synod has expressed its resolve to leave the Ecumenical movement, but the practical application of this in action would be to sever Eucharistic Communion with all the Churches which participate in Ecumenism."

Point 5 states, "If the Synod does not come to a decision concerning this matter, then it will be obvious that the Synod's Declaration of its intent to leave the Ecumenical movement was only a tactical maneuver to mislead the faithful. In actual fact the Georgian Church would remain a participant in Ecumenism."

The 6th Point warns that "Unless a decision concerning the severing of Eucharistic Communion with all the Churches participating in the Ecumenical movement is reached, then my own decision to sever Eucharistic Communion with Catholicos-Patriarch Elias II remains in force, since the Georgian Church in actuality has not left Ecumenism." This letter was supported by several abbots displaced by Elias from their monasteries.

Seeing that disorder in the Georgian Church was beginning to develop, Patriarch Elias II created a committee of 16 members, which consisted of 3 bishops, several priests and lay people in order to determine the relationship of the Georgian Church toward Ecumenism. Elias even sent his delegates to Betania Monastery to invite its fathers to participate in the committee.

The zealots for Orthodoxy refused to participate in the "study" of a matter so absolutely clear to any Orthodox, and expressed the hope that discussion of this elementary matter will not need more than a week's time for discussion and with their answer they enclosed 12 points of their anathemas of Ecumenism.

On July 9/22 the Georgian fathers anathematized not only the Ecumenical heresy, but also those who recognized Monophysites as Orthodox (Point 4); who accepted the "Balamand Union" according to which the Papacy became "a Sister Church" of the Orthodox Church (Point 5); those who illegally lifted the anathemas against Catholicism imposed upon it by the Councils of Constantinople in the years 1341, 1347 and 1351 (Point 6); signed Antiochean Agreement of 1991, as result of which the Syrian Church entered in full Eucharistic Communion with the Jacobites (Monophysites) (Point 7); also the adherents of the so called "new-style" (calendar) (Point 8) and several other heretics.

After several days (July 11/24) an article from Elias II was distributed on the Internet as his own and as his approximate reaction to the anathemas of Orthodox Georgians under title "Schismatic Old-calendarists Attack Georgian Church."

In this article, among other things said, we find: "The Georgian Church on numerous occasions declared that *"the Ecumenical movement is not a heresy. There is one purpose to the participation of the Orthodox autocephalous Churches in the Ecumenical movement: that every person would become a member of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.*" This is a basic of an Orthodox Ecumenism" (italics by "Ch. N.").

The article finishes with the declaration that "the Catholicos-Patriarch, All-holy and Blessed Elias II, addressed the nation with an appeal in which he unmasked schism and expressed the confidence that fanaticism and intolerance will not take hold in church-going people."

To prove that he is in no way a "fanatic and intolerant," Elias II sent to Betania Monastery his own storm troops: priests and lay people under command of an Archimandrite Joakim. The Brotherhood fathers met them with crosses and icons and asked to proclaim a short explanation on their stand. But the storming group would not let them speak and forcing them to the side at the command of this gallant Archimandrite burst into the monastery. In the face of such pressure each of the brothers quietly went to his cell. Then Joakim took a short break and sent a messenger to the Patriarchate for more instructions. They were speedily received. In accordance with them, the storm troops burst into individual cells and started to push out the monks. The Brotherhood asked for at least a 24 hour grace period to gather their belongings, but were refused and were ordered to immediately leave the monastery. Even their small bags were searched.

As the exiled Brotherhood was leaving their monastery, they saw at the gates several priests who looked slightly ashamed and a group of people. The monastery fathers asked them to be witnesses that there was violence against them. To this, some turned away their faces and one priest followed Pilate's example and declared that he is "washing his hands"!

Later that evening (August 9/22) an interview was given on television by Protopresbyter George Gamrekeli who made a declaration, typical of the Soviet patriarchates: "after the lawful rector entered the monastery, the Brotherhood, as a sign of protest, left for the forest"!

In the "Information Bulletin" #10 - 11, 1997 (of the Moscow Patriarchate Dept. External Relations) there was published an interview of its correspondent with Fr. Vasily Kobahidze, a press secretary of Catholicos-Patriarch Elias.

When asked about the circumstances of the schism in Georgia, he said: "First of all, I would like to point out that our Church is very small one [about 3 million people, all together some 500 hundred parishes and slightly more than 500 priests -- "Ch. N."] and when five monasteries leave it in schism, it has very painful repercussions for the faithful and the people in the Church. *We are at fault that we did not pay enough attention to the anti-ecumenical propaganda which for decades has been circulated in our Church.* [italics by "Ch. N.]" Archpriest Vasily explained that among the population there was a whole lot of such literature and it highly influenced the faithful. In spite of the explanation by the hierarchy that Ecumenism is not a heresy, but supposedly only a forum for theological discussions, "most of the people were already taken in by the anti-ecumenical propaganda." Priest Kobahidze accuses Archimandrite John Sheklashvili of being the main leader of this Orthodox movement

was joined by several large and prestigious monasteries. "The problem is that although it was only the monasteries who officially proclaimed the schismatic process, a portion of the married clergy of the capital of Tbilisi, as well as of the clergy of two dioceses, were also ready to join in schism. The laity of one diocese wrote that if the decision is not taken to withdraw from Ecumenical organizations, then they would also go into schism... On May 20th the building which houses our Patriarchate was surrounded by armed forces. *And in order to avoid tearing apart the fabric of the Church, which would have grown into a rift in the*

*society, and would have fostered a destabilization in the government and even bloodshed, the Catholicos-Patriarch Elias II and his Holy Synod were forced to take decision to withdraw from the Ecumenical movement, the WCC and ECC."* (Italics by "Ch. N.") EDITOR'S NOTE: there is a slight difference between Russian and English texts, but we consulted both originals.

In this interview with ecumenist Kobahidze, who complains about the Orthodox, he also gives us a very encouraging information about faithful and clergy of Georgia. He relates: *"It is possible that I am wrong, but in my opinion about 70% of the faithful to one degree or other are infected with schismatic theology. When we left the Ecumenical movement, there were many articles that this was an Orthodox endeavor, that the Church is straightening out its own path"*. (Italics by "Ch. N.")

To the question of whether there is a possibility of the Orthodox Church following the sectarian psychology, the press secretary of Elias II answered that "for some reason sectarian psychology is compelling to people, *seminarians and younger clergy*. Why? I have not yet fully understood why."

It is doubtful that he will be ever be capable of understanding, since he admits that "Our Patriarch took a very active participation in the Ecumenical movement. For this reason they present him as heretic and as a person who consecrated a large portion of his life to a heretical task." Therefore, when he states that "A significant part of this schism is directed against the Patriarch Elias, indeed against one of the most spiritual and enlightened patriarchs who exists in today's Orthodox world" it is obvious that he can in no way understand the Church's teaching of her uniqueness.

On August 11/24 in the USA a fax was received from Georgia in which it was reported that "Yesterday afternoon of the 24th, Archimandrite Joachim and his 'novices' showed up at the Zarzma Monastery and presented an ultimatum to the Abbot, Fr. George: Surrender the monastery within twenty-four hours, otherwise they would take it by force. The 'guests' did not leave a copy of the ultimatum with Fr. George, evidently fearing that he would publish it. Fr. George said over telephone that he does not intend to surrender the monastery and will stand 'to the end.' He is counting on support from the surrounding villages."

We hope to give the details of seizure of Zarzma Monastery by the Catholicos in our next issue.

It is quite obvious that the KGB methods of the Moscow and Georgian Patriarchates did in no way change with the introduction of "democratic" regimes in the former Soviet Union and this underlines once more, that data about involvement of the hierarchies in this criminal and antichristian organization, is on valid ground.

A heroic defense of Orthodoxy by the tiny Georgian Church's clergy and people should serve as an example to all Orthodox of other Churches. An common opposition to the Ecumenical heresy by united clergy and people forced the heretical Georgian hierarchy to formally withdraw from the Ecumenical movement. This once more justified the age old Orthodox tradition of the hierarchy controlling the laity and the laity controlling the hierarchy as soon as they notice a heresy!